

Revelation 6 - The First Six Seals

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COURSE COMMENTARY

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6:1 - the first seal

- **the Lamb opened one of the seals**

The Lamb now initiates the steps leading to the eventual establishment of His kingdom on earth. Thus begins a unique time in human history:

- 1) **Severity** - Judgments more severe than ever before in history. The coming day is so unique there is "none like it" ([Mat. 24:21](#)). This is the time of testing to come upon the world ([Rev. 3:10](#)).
- 2) **Wrath of the Lamb** - It is the wrath of God's *Son* which is now being manifested.
- 3) **Final Flowering of Sin** - Humanism and Satanism will be at their apex on a global scale. The *descent of man* will be complete.
- 4) **Ushering in God's Kingdom** - The systems of man will be swept aside making way for the Messianic Kingdom on earth.

- **the Lamb taught about this time**

Everything which transpires from here forward is *completely* under the control of God. It is the Lamb, *Jesus Christ*, Who initiates the judgments. Hence, we are not surprised that He taught of this time:

False Messiahs: [Mat. 24:5, 11](#); [Mark 13:6](#); [Luke 21:8](#); [Rev 6:2](#).

Wars: [Mat. 24:6-7](#); [Mark 13:7](#); [Luke 21:9](#); [Rev. 6:4](#).

Famines: [Mat. 24:7](#); [Mark 13:8](#); [Luke 21:10](#); [Rev. 6:5-6, 8](#).

Pestilences: [Luke 21:11](#); [Rev. 6:8](#).

Persecution: [Mat. 24:9](#); [Mark 13:9-13](#); [Luke 21:12-17](#); [Rev. 6:9-11](#).

Earthquakes: [Mat. 24:7](#); [Mark 13:8](#); [Luke 21:11](#); [Rev. 6:12](#).

Cosmic Phenomena: [Mat. 24:29](#); [Mark 13:24-25](#); [Luke 21:11](#); [Rev. 6:12-14](#).

- **relation of seals, bowls, trumpets**

Each series of judgments (seals, bowls, trumpets) consists of an initial six judgments followed by a seventh. The seventh contains the next set of judgments. The seventh seal contains the trumpet judgments and the seventh trumpet contains the bowl judgments. See the lesson where we discussed the [Literary Structure](#) of the book.

- **the beginning of sorrows**

The first four seals correlate with what Jesus described as "the beginning of sorrows" ([Mat. 24:8](#)).

- **come and see**

Greek texts differ on whether the phrase *and see* is included. If present, **John** is being addressed. If absent, **the riders** are probably being called to ride forth.

6:2 - a white horse

- **similarities with Christ**

- 1) Both ride a white horse ([Rev. 19:11](#)).

- 2) Both wear a crown (although Jesus wears many crowns, [Rev. 19:12](#)).
 - 3) Both are "overcomers" ([Dan. 7:25](#); [Rev. 3:21](#); [13:7](#); [17:14](#)).
- [differences from Christ](#)
 - 1) The Lamb is loosing the seals, not riding forth.
 - 2) The Lamb wields a *sword*, not a *bow* ([Rev. 2:12](#); [19:15](#)).
 - 3) The Lamb rides at the *end* of the Tribulation, not the *beginning* .
 - [the rider is Antichrist](#)
The beginning of birth pangs includes *false messiahs* ([Mat. 24:4-5](#)). He *looks* like a savior, but will be a *deceiver* who conquers by devious means.
 - [a bow... a crown... to conquer](#)
The *bow* symbolizes strength. The *crown* symbolizes authority. He is *given* the crown and goes out as an "overcomer."

6:4 - the second seal

- [a red horse](#)
Red denotes bloodshed. The horseman takes "peace from the earth." The initial success of the white horsemen eventually degenerates into widespread war. This is a time of unprecedented bloodshed.

6:5-6 - the third seal

- [a black horse](#)
"Black" is *melas*, which describes clothing used in mourning or the color of evil. A quart, *choenix*, was the amount of food provided to a soldier each day. A denarius was a workman's average daily wage. Men will work hard each day *just to have enough to survive*. *Oil and wine* may refer to luxury items or different types of crops which are not harmed by the conditions of the famine.

6:7-8 - the fourth seal

- [a pale horse... Death and Hades](#)
"Pale" is *chloro's* from which we get *chlorophyll* which describes the green pigments in plants. Here it describes the pallor of sickness and death. One fourth of the population of earth perishes. Using today's population figure (6 billion) would mean *over 1.5 billion* dead! (See the [world population clock](#).) This number would be reduced by the believers taken in the rapture prior to the Tribulation.

6:9-11 - the fifth seal

- [slain for the word of God](#)
The "beginning of sorrows" has passed and now begins a time of unprecedented religious persecution, martyrdom and anti-Semitism. The souls of the martyrs are under the base of the altar, reminiscent of the pouring of blood at the base of the altar of sacrifice ([Ex. 29:12](#); [Lev. 8:15](#)). The harlot will persecute those who are Christ's for she is "drunk with the blood of the saints" ([Rev. 17:6](#)).
- [judge... those who dwell on the earth](#)
As the *Goel* (kinsman-redeemer), Christ will eventually avenge His saints ([Isa. 63:3-4](#)). The

phrase: *those who dwell on the earth* has special meaning in the book of Revelation. It describes those who remain steadfastly opposed to God throughout the judgments. They are not written in the Book of Life ([Rev. 13:8](#); [17:8](#)). Their citizenship is not in heaven ([Php. 3:20](#)).

- [white robe](#)

They are the overcomers who are given white robes which represent the righteousness of Christ on their behalf ([Rev. 3:5](#), [18](#); [12:11](#)).

6:12 - the sixth seal

- [the Day of the Lord](#)

The signs which accompany the sixth seal indicate the Day of the Lord is now underway. The "thief in the night" has now arrived in judgment ([1Th. 5:2-10](#)).

- [a great earthquake](#)

"Earthquake" is *seismo's* which means "a shaking" and is used more broadly than just shaking the earth ([Mat. 8:24](#)). Here even the *heavens* are shaken.

- [sun became black... moon became like blood](#)

The darkening of the sun *may* be from the perspective of viewers on the earth--due to material ejected into the atmosphere by the earthquake or the impact from asteroids or meteors described in the next verse.

- [stars of heaven fell to the earth](#)

"Stars" is *aste'res* from which we get the word *asteroid*. Probably asteroids or meteors are involved. These cosmic disturbances are not mere hyperbole (see the lesson where we discuss the [Interpretation of Symbols](#)). Jesus predicted these signs prior to His Second Coming ([Mat. 24:29-30](#); cf [Mark 13:24](#); [Luke 23:44-45](#)).

6:14 - the sixth seal

- [the sky receded](#)

"Receded" is *apechori'sthe*, a term used to describe the *parting* of Paul and Silas from Barnabas and Mark ([Acts 15:39](#)). An enormous and terrifying site which we cannot explain, probably violating the static laws of physics (which all miracles do)! Not the ultimate passage of the heavens, which does not come until Revelation [20:11](#).

- [every mountain and island moved](#)

Huge convulsions leading to permanent geographical changes. Worldwide mapping databases are instantly rendered useless.

6:15 - the sixth seal

- [kings of the earth](#)

These are the kings which failed to "kiss the Son, lest He be angry" ([Ps. 2:12](#)).

- [great men... mighty men](#)

The *great ones* and *strong ones* who do not occupy positions of rulership, but who influence and control from positions of corporate power and wealth.

- [commanders](#)

"Commanders" is *chilia's* meaning *one thousand*. Leaders over a thousand troops. Roughly

equivalent to a major or colonel.

- **every slave and every free**
Every category of people is included.
- **hid themselves in caves**
They are gripped by intense fear as all man-made shelter proves useless.

6:16 - the sixth seal

- **from the face of Him who sits on the throne**
The Father who is fully behind the events which the Lamb has initiated having taken the scroll.
- **the wrath of the Lamb**
The Lamb who was silently led to the slaughter ([Isa. 53:7](#)) now metes out wrath. He opens *each* of the seals bringing forth judgments. These judgments constitute **the wrath of God** -- something which the church is exempt from.
- **the great day of His wrath**
This is the *Day of the Lord* which was to come as a "thief in the night." Jesus described this frightful day ([Luke 21:25-26](#)). See the lesson where we discussed [Related Passages and Themes](#).
- **has come**
"Has come" is *el'then* which is in the aorist tense which normally denotes past time. The wrath *has already* come -- this is what the earth dwellers are fleeing from!

For additional information on this topic, see the [commentary](#).